

Cover Page



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Title: 'Let us Live as Hindus': Narrating Hindu Identity Through Temple Building Processes in Amsterdam Zuidoost (1988-2015)

Issue Date: 2016-10-27

PART I

PRODUCING LOCALITY AND CONSTRUCTING HINDU SPACES IN AMSTERDAM ZUIDOOST

Introduction

On a crisp morning in 2013, I stood with three women in a temple in Amsterdam Zuidoost. As I described my research about Hindu temples in neighbourhood, one woman, who would go on to become one of my key respondents, immediately interjected and said: *'Where there are Hindus, there should be a temple. I live in Utrecht, I think there should be one there, too!'* The other two women nodded solemnly in agreement and continued talking about their relatives in Suriname, their plans for the rest of the afternoon, and the latest news in their tight-knit friendship circle.

Indeed, in most places in the Netherlands where there are Hindus, there are temple spaces nearby. The first purpose-built temple, the Radha Krishna Temple opened its doors in Osdorp, in the west of Amsterdam in 2001. Recent crowning achievements have been the purpose-built temple (in Surinamese-Hindu style) in Wijchen (in Gelderland province), established in 2009¹², and the Sri Varatharajah Selva Temple (In Sri Lankan Tamil style) in Den Helder¹³, the first purpose-built South Indian temple in the country. Among other places, The Hague, Rotterdam and Almere have well-attended and well-known temples. On the other hand, there are many places that continue to use community centres or converted churches and old buildings for a few days a week as a place of worship.

The neighbourhood of Amsterdam Zuidoost has four functioning temple spaces— by far the greatest concentration of Hindu spaces of any neighbourhood in Amsterdam. However, none of them are purpose-built. Establishing themselves in garage spaces, industrial areas, offices and farm-houses, these spaces are mostly invisible: unlike the minarets of the neighbourhood's Taibah Mosque, Amsterdam Zuidoost lacks a visible temple space that marks off the Dutch public landscape (cf. Sunier 2009) as 'Hindu'.

Part I begins by addressing the relationship between producing locality in Amsterdam Zuidoost as the four temple spaces that are now found in the neighbourhood.

Chapter 1, 'Hindu 'Groupness' in Amsterdam Zuidoost' begins by narrating the migration trajectories of four major Hindu groups in Amsterdam Zuidoost: Surinamese Hindus, direct

¹² See Nugeteren (2009, 2014) for an ethnographic study of the Wijchen temple.

¹³ See <http://www.hindutemple.nl/> for a detailed visual account of the temple.

migrant Indians, Afghan Hindus and recent middle class professional migrants from India, and contextualise how 'Hindu' came to be conflated with Surinamese Hindu identity. It then goes on to examine the historical background of diaspora group-making in the neighbourhood as an ongoing, strategic process (cf. Sökefeld 2006, Brubaker 2005) that has its antecedents in the processes of 'ethnicisation' of Hindus (Vertovec and van der Veer 1991) in the Caribbean after indentured labour migration into Suriname and ethnic minority policies in the 1980s in the Netherlands. Rather than take for granted that 'Hindus' form a coherent group, this chapter forwards an understanding of instances and processes of 'groupness' rather than groups. These two instances of groupness are precursors to the processes that will be explored in Parts II and III.

Chapter 2, 'Producing a Hindu Locality in Amsterdam Zuidoost', then examines how the history of the locality has impacted the ways in which Hindu temple building has been framed. It does so by suggesting that Amsterdam Zuidoost be discussed as a contested locality that has struggled to be recognised and valued in the way that many designers, urban planners and community elites have envisioned. In particular, I highlight the ongoing problems that various Hindu actors encounter when trying to lay claim to the neighbourhood as 'home' and represent themselves as 'local subjects' (cf. Appadurai 1996) in relation to their fraught historical relationship with groupings of other Surinamese migrants. It goes on to interrogate how establishing a temple in a neighbourhood like Amsterdam Zuidoost—a so-called multicultural paradise—has become an urgent task for Hindus who feel their public identity is invisible in an area where 'other' religious minorities have already laid their claims to public space.

Chapter 3, 'Current Temple Spaces in Amsterdam Zuidoost' focuses on how the 2010 forced evacuation by the local district government of a temporary temple space that had served the community for 12 years that drastically altered the processes of temple-building. It gives a brief description of each temple space in the neighbourhood: the Devi Dhaam (DD temple), Lord Shiva Hindu Temples (LSHT), Sri Sitaram Dhaam (SSD) and Stichting Asamai (Asamai). This chapter explores how the closing of one space has facilitated the growth and development of others in the neighbourhood. Rather than see these spaces as utopian, dream-like spaces of sacralisation, I argue that these temple spaces—temporary, invisible, and makeshift—are heterotopic realities (cf. Foucault 1986, Soja 1996, Hetherington 1997) that serve to order space and time according to specific visions of Hindu-ness that respond to the closing of the DD temple.